



## *Evidence Snapshot*

April 2015

Photo courtesy of: Wellington Regional Council

# Promoting Physical Activity at the Local Government Level

Prepared by Hayley Goodin,  
National Project Manager, Agencies for Nutrition Action

Agencies for [www.ana.org.nz](http://www.ana.org.nz)

**NUTRITION  
ACTION**

Ngā Takawaenga Hāpai Kai Hauora



The vision	3
.....	
Why should local government be involved in the promotion of physical activity?	3
.....	
The impact of physical inactivity	3
.....	
What can local government do?	4
.....	
The benefits of physical activity	4
.....	
What factors influence physical activity at the local government level?	5
.....	
How and where can local government intervene to promote physical activity?	6
.....	
Active transport	6
.....	
The built and natural environment	6
.....	
What is the effectiveness of local government interventions in promoting physical activity?	7
.....	
Active transport	7
.....	
Built and natural environment	7
.....	
What can you do?	8
.....	
Other useful tools and resources	9
.....	
Case Studies	9
.....	
References	10
.....	
Acknowledgements	11
.....	
Appendix One: Local government overview	12

*'Imagine a future where our communities, towns and cities were designed to encourage more people to use active modes of transport to get to their destination. Or a country where all children achieved their full potential in a school environment where physical activity was a normal part of their day, both inside and outside of the classroom, and provided for a positive experience. A country where family time meant moving together and playing together because it was fun, accessible and affordable. A country with a thriving economy built on a culture where standing and activity breaks were the norm, maximising productivity, efficiency and innovation. As a nation we would be happier, healthier, stronger and more connected.'*<sup>(1)</sup>

Everyone has a part to play in making physical activity a daily norm and in creating environments that make it easy. However, local government is uniquely placed to be able to create environments which will promote opportunities for physical activity and active living in the places we live, learn, work and play. The vision, plans and operation of local government impact on our lives every single day. However, since the amendments to the Local Government Act in 2012 there is concern the changes to the purpose and processes of local government, will have a negative impact on the promotion of health and wellbeing at a local level.

This snapshot aims to equip those wishing to engage with local government with the rationale, evidence and tools for promoting physical activity. It starts with

summarising why physical activity is important and how local government can create supportive environments. There are case studies of successful engagement with local government to improve physical activity outcomes.

A literature review which focuses on promoting physical activity through supportive environments, and incorporating physical activity into local government strategic and operational activities, underpins this snapshot<sup>(2)</sup>.

The review also includes the findings of five interviews conducted with individuals working for, or with local government in physical activity, active transport and sport and recreation.

## Why should local government be involved in the promotion of physical activity?

### The impact of physical inactivity

***Physical inactivity poses a serious and growing danger to our society. It not only damages our health but also our economy and environment and limits the educational attainment and futures of our children<sup>1</sup>.***

Globally, there is a decreasing trend in physical activity. New Zealand has been identified as one of the least active countries in the world, with 48 percent of New Zealand adults being inactive compared to the global average of 31 percent<sup>(3)</sup>.

Changes to our living environment over recent decades, such as new technologies, urbanisation and car-oriented built environments<sup>(4)</sup>, have led to an increase in sedentary behaviour at home, in transit and at work and have resulted in a decline in physical activity levels.

Physical inactivity and sedentary behaviour are major risk factors for the leading causes of death in New Zealand.

The impacts of physical inactivity to society are expensive e.g. in 2010 estimates put the cost of physical inactivity in New Zealand at \$1.3 billion. The direct costs attributable to avoidable diseases associated with insufficient physical activity were estimated to cost New Zealand \$614 million<sup>(5)</sup>.

Now, more than ever, with growing trends in physical inactivity, obesity and non-communicable diseases, physical activity needs to be brought back into the daily lives of all New Zealanders.

---

<sup>1</sup>Local government in New Zealand consists of 11 regional councils, 61 territorial authorities (11 city councils and 50 district councils) and 6 unitary councils (which are territorial authorities with regional council responsibilities). Councils may also set up local or community boards (there are currently 116 community boards and 21 local boards, with local boards only operating in Auckland).

---



# What can local government do?

The local environment has a big influence of the physical activity of citizens. Local governments invest billions of dollars in providing indoor and outdoor sporting facilities<sup>(6)</sup>. Through policies, planning and development and the provision and management of these facilities and services, local government can shape the environment for its citizens.

The World Health Organization recommends making physical activity and active living a priority to combat the growing trend of non-communicable diseases<sup>(7)</sup>. It is already a priority at the local government level in a number of countries around the world.

**Local government can create supportive local environments that enable and encourage people to easily incorporate physical activity into their daily lives through:**

- incorporating physical activity considerations into council strategic and operational plans
- ensuring pedestrians and cyclists are a priority, in the development of new infrastructure and when roads are upgraded
- neighbourhood planning: developing communities with mixed land use, easy access to local amenities, and green spaces and connected road networks
- providing physical activity facilities, such as swimming pools and sport and recreation centres
- information dissemination and awareness programmes
- providing leadership, and bringing agencies and community groups together to improve the health and wellbeing of their communities.

---

## The benefits of physical activity

The benefits of physical activity are far-reaching and extend beyond the health of individuals<sup>(3)</sup>. Being physically active is a major contributor to an individual's overall physical and mental health and wellbeing. However, it also provides a number of wider community benefits likely to be of greater interest to local government. These benefits can help to convince local government to become involved in the promotion of physical activity<sup>(1,7-9)</sup>.

**The benefits include:**

- increased liveability of the local government area and a safer and more sustainable community
- increased vibrancy and an enhanced community appeal to drive economic prosperity
- improved infrastructure, e.g. walking and cycle trails, which would attract tourists
- improved safety through a reduction in vehicle usage and congestion and, an increase in walking and cycling
- improved air quality and a reduction in carbon emissions to benefit climate change
- enlivening the local economy as pedestrians and cyclists have better access to buy from local businesses rather than driving to centralised shopping areas
- protection of local habitats and biodiversity through the provision of parks, open spaces and linking green corridors and natural environments
- improved perception of community safety as there are more people around in public places
- increased productivity and a reduction in absenteeism in local workplaces
- improved community health and wellbeing, social inclusion and quality of life.

---

**Active children do better:** physical activity is essential for healthy growth and development, it increases cognitive outcomes and school attainment, and improves social interaction and confidence.

**Active people do better:** physical activity reduces the risk of all-cause mortality, coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, stroke, depression, some cancers, metabolic syndrome and falls.

**Active workplaces do better:** physical activity programmes in the workplace reduce absenteeism and active workers are happier, better team players, and more productive.

**An active population drives a stronger economy:** a reduction in physical inactivity would save the economy through direct costs associated with health expenditure and indirect health costs associated with productivity, pain and suffering, and health promotion campaigns<sup>(1)</sup>.

---

Appendix One provides an overview of the requirements and core functions of local government, as set out in the Local Government Act 2002<sup>(10)</sup> and notes other relevant legislation. While there are no explicit requirements for local government to promote physical activity, there are many opportunities to frame the argument for the promotion of physical activity in a way that aligns with central and local government priorities.

## These opportunities include:

- the contribution physical activity makes to central government's broader agenda to build a more competitive and productive economy
- the requirement for local government to act for and on behalf of communities
- the requirement for local government to meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses.

International studies have also identified a number of factors that can influence the involvement of local government in the promotion of physical activity<sup>(11-13)</sup>.

- **Evidence:** A strong business case which presents relevant local evidence of the issue is important for local government action. Raising awareness of the health and economic burden, showing the issue is of local concern, and providing cost-effective solutions are more likely to get local government engagement than health statistics unrelated to the local community. For local government, evidence needs to be more than just health statistics. While these may help put physical activity on the agenda, cost-benefit data is more likely to be convincing. Demonstrations of good practice and success by presenting case studies, especially from other local authorities, can be useful to support your case.
- **Relationships:** Developing close working relationships with council staff is essential to gain buy-in, support and leadership to promote physical activity at a local level. Finding a champion or advocate within council and forming collaborative working relationships with council and across departments, are both extremely beneficial.
- **Working collaboratively:** Joining forces with other allies in your sector to form advocacy / representative groups can be very effective. This adds to your voice and gives council one point of contact to enable engagement with the while sector.

- **Community lobbying:** Community buy-in and lobbying can be very powerful and sometimes more influential than the evidence-base.
- **Central and local government priorities:** Reframing the case for physical activity to align with central and local government priorities, such as liveability and economic development, can also be effective.
- **Policy priority/provision of funding:** When a policy area is supported by central government, funding is often more accessible at a local government level. Requirements under local government legislation, as well as national and region specific legislation can influence local government priorities.
- **Council structure and support:** A local government structure with strong leadership, communication, and support for cross-departmental collaboration is more likely to enable policy responses that address the broader determinants of physical activity.
- **Leadership:** Local leadership ideally needs to be supported by national leadership and investment to have the greatest impact. Placing the physical activity agenda at the heart of both central and local government priorities would have a direct impact on the opportunities for everyone to be active.
- **Effective communication:** Ensuring all parties working on a project have the same priorities and perspectives to avoid working at cross purposes e.g. a roading engineer's priority might be to improve traffic flow when others are working to increase usability and safety for pedestrians. Agreement on the purpose early in the process is likely to result in better outcomes.

*While there are no explicit requirements for local government to promote physical activity, there are many opportunities to frame the argument for the promotion of physical activity in a way that aligns with central and local government priorities.*

There is strong evidence local environments can encourage people to adopt and maintain healthier lifestyles. (9,14-16) Even when individuals are motivated, healthy lifestyle changes are difficult to adopt and maintain if they are not supported by the local environment<sup>(9)</sup>. The World Health Organization has reported changing the local environment alone can prevent one-third of physical inactivity<sup>(17)</sup>. Local government can create environments that encourage physical activity in the following ways.

## Active transport

Active transport is the most practical and sustainable way to increase physical activity on a daily basis<sup>(18)</sup>. Local government, more specifically regional councils, are responsible for regional land transport strategies and programmes as required by the Land Transport Management Act, 2003<sup>(19)</sup>. Regional councils determine the type and number of transport options available for a region including public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure and support. These local level decisions are also influenced by the Government's Policy Statement on Land Transport<sup>(20)</sup>. This has three areas of focus:

- (1) economic growth and productivity
- (2) value for money
- (3) road safety.

### Local government can also promote walking and cycling by<sup>(15,21-22,30)</sup>:

- ensuring local strategies, policies and plans support and encourage an increase in the availability and uptake of walking and cycling opportunities
- ensuring the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are prioritised over other road users when developing new infrastructure or maintaining streets and roads
- planning and designing comprehensive and high quality networks of walkways and cycleways to help people

get to destinations safely and directly, in all new land developments and changes to roads

- ensuring planning applications for new developments prioritise physical activity and local facilities, and services are easily accessible on foot or by bike
- provision of cycle parking and end-of-trip facilities (e.g. bike storage, showers and changing facilities, lockers) and ensuring all new developments provide facilities that promote walking and cycling
- promoting walking and cycling in the community through awareness campaigns, and publicising walking and cycling facilities (including walking and cycling route networks through signage and maps) and cycle parking
- integrating public and active transport, allowing for bikes on trains and adequate storage options for cyclists at transport hubs
- encouraging and creating a walking and cycling culture within all local government workplaces
- working with schools and workplaces to develop travel plans to encourage walking and cycling
- reviewing parking policies and establishing parking maximum (vs minimum) requirements
- introducing traffic calming measures to busy urban environments.

## The built and natural environment

Opportunities for people to be physically active are influenced by the way cities are built, by the design of urban environments and access to natural environments<sup>(7)</sup>. Local government is responsible for many of these areas at a local level. Local government also has a mandate to meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality infrastructure, local public services such as facilities for sport and recreation and places to be active including parks, trails and reserves.

### Local government can provide a supportive built and natural environment by<sup>(7,15-16,30)</sup>:

- ensuring local strategies, policies and plans support and encourage an increase in the availability and uptake of physical activity opportunities, including walking and cycling, informal play, active recreation and sport

- providing quality public open and green spaces that encourage walking and cycling, informal play, active recreation and sport in all neighbourhoods
- creating communities and neighbourhood parks that support physical activity and active living through street layout, land use, and location of recreation facilities
- providing quality sporting and recreation facilities to cater for all people in the community
- working with schools to encourage community use of physical activity facilities outside of school hours
- improving public transport infrastructure and provision of facilities to encourage people to walk or cycle to and from public transport.

*'Physical activity - a powerful investment in people, health, the economy and sustainability'*  
*The Toronto Charter for Physical Activity*

## Active transport

- Children who walk or cycle to school are more physically active overall than those who choose alternate transport modes<sup>(8)</sup>.
- Children are more likely to walk or cycle to school if their communities have footpaths and traffic lights leading to schools<sup>(23)</sup>.
- People who live close to a variety of destinations of interest are more likely to walk and cycle<sup>(8)</sup>.
- People who use public transport are more physically active than those who use their cars<sup>(8)</sup>.
- People are more physically active in communities which have pedestrian and cycle-friendly infrastructure which leads to destinations of interest<sup>(23-24)</sup>.
- Walking is greatest in communities with high connectivity and direct travel routes, and few obstacles and major road crossings between homes, shops, workplaces and other destinations<sup>(9)</sup>.
- Improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure have been shown to be cost-effective<sup>(21)</sup>, with return on investment on quality walking and cycling infrastructure ranging from 10:1 to 24:1<sup>(25-26)</sup>.

## Built and natural environment

- There is strong evidence that the way our cities, communities and neighbourhoods are built affects the travel behaviour choices of both adults and children<sup>(15)</sup>.
- Physical activity has been shown to increase by 161 percent in neighbourhoods where people live close to shops and schools, streets are well connected, there is a high population density and people have access to green spaces<sup>(27)</sup>.
- People walk more, and recreational physical activity is greatest, in neighbourhoods designed to be safe, walkable and aesthetically pleasing<sup>(8)</sup>.
- Children are more likely to engage in physical activity in walkable neighbourhoods with close access to recreation facilities<sup>(28)</sup>.
- Children are more likely to walk to school in neighbourhoods which have low traffic speeds, low traffic volumes and connected street networks<sup>(29)</sup>.
- People who live closer to destinations of interest including work, shops, entertainment and public transport are more likely to be physically active through active modes of transport<sup>(8)</sup>.
- Improving lighting, access to and the safety of street crossings, pathway continuity, traffic calming measures and aesthetic enhancements have been shown to increase physical activity levels by 35 percent<sup>(27)</sup>.
- People are more likely to be physically active if they have easy access to large and attractive public open spaces and convenient facilities for physical activity, such as parks and walking and cycling trails, and where barriers, including safety and affordability, are reduced<sup>(8,23-24)</sup>.

***Children are more likely to engage in physical activity in walkable neighbourhoods with close access to recreation facilities.***



The key take home message from this snapshot is:

*Even though local government may not have a mandate to promote physical activity, it still has an important role to play. There is strong evidence that the way environments are built can have a positive impact on physical activity. Local government is uniquely placed to be able to create environments to encourage physical activity through policies, planning and development, and the provision and management of facilities and services.*

Here are some ideas of how you can get involved in getting physical activity on the agenda at the local government level.

- Get to know your local council. Visit the council website to understand the structure, vision, and priorities as well as the plans, policies and bylaws that might impact on physical activity.
- Develop relationships with local council staff, ideally at different levels including councillors and policy makers, and across council departments. Take every opportunity to get to know your local council staff. By developing strong relationships your organisation is more likely to be seen as an important partner to local government.
- Make yourself or your organisation useful to local government. Show them you can add value to the planning process by providing skills and knowledge in the area of physical activity.
- Find a champion, a councillor or staff member who understands the importance of physical activity and health, who can provide support and inside information.
- Frame your ideas to align with council priorities. Health and wellbeing is no longer a focus of local government but if you frame your argument to fit with council priorities it is more likely to be acknowledged in the planning process.
- Get involved in your local council's planning process. Council budgets and spending are driven by long term plans so it is important to be part of the planning process. Be visible, attend meetings and become familiar with the planning process so your considerations are included in these plans and budgets. Once plans and budgets are set there is little flexibility to add other work until the next planning round.
- Provide benefits and solutions to local government for investing in physical activity, and explain how your ideas are going to help with council priorities.
- Look for alternative or creative ways of funding your ideas. Do not expect council to fund everything.
- Use the wording and references used in this snapshot and literature review to write submissions on long term plans, annual plans and other relevant plans, policies and bylaws that impact on physical activity. All submission opportunities are posted on council websites so be sure to check regularly.
- Where possible, try to frame submissions in a positive way. Give support for the positive things council is doing and support it to be 'bolder'. Provide constructive and reasoned feedback and ensure your submission is supported with local evidence. Follow up with an oral submission, this is particularly important as councillors are present.
- You are more likely to get engagement with council if you are positive. Try to avoid being negative and critical of council plans and work.
- Link with other like-minded organisations, like Agencies for Nutrition Action, which can provide advice in writing submissions.
- Link with other organisations to help promote your message. Think outside the square and team up with organisations outside of your sector.
- Work with the community and get locals to help you deliver your message.
- Be aware that you may need to work with both local and regional councils to make progress on active transport issues.
- No matter what your role or whether you work nationally or regionally, you can encourage local government to be more proactive in providing physical activity opportunities for either your own local area or the area you work in.

***Even though local government may not have a mandate to promote physical activity, it still has an important role to play.***



[A guide for health promoters: working with communities to participate in the submission process \(NZ\)](#)

---

[Urban Design Case Studies: Local Government \(NZ\)](#)

---

[Supporting a public health perspective in local and regional government \(NZ\)](#)

---

[Active Healthy Communities: a resource package for local government to create supportive environments for physical activity and healthy eating \(Australia\)](#)

---

[Healthy Spaces and Places: A national guide to designing places for healthy living \(Australia\)](#)

---

[Increasing participation in physical activity: local government action guide no. 3 \(Australia\)](#)

---

[Active Design Guidelines: Promoting physical activity and health in design \(USA\)](#)

---

[ChangeLab Solutions: Law and policy innovation for the common good \(USA\)](#)

---

[Designing and Building Healthy Places \(USA\)](#)

---

[Healthy places: Wellbeing in the local environment \(UK\)](#)

---

[Active by design: Designing places for healthy lives \(UK\)](#)

---

[Healthy people, healthy places briefing \(UK\)](#)

---

[NICE local government briefings \(UK\)](#)

---

[Planning healthy-weight environments \(UK\)](#)

---

[Health Economic and Assessment Tool for Walking and Cycling \(WHO\)](#)

---

[Young People's Survey](#)

---

[Value of Sport and Recreation](#)

---

## Case studies

A separate case study document provides three different scenarios of successful engagement with local government which has led to an improvement in physical activity opportunities for local communities.

1. All-Party Commission on Physical Activity. (2014). *Tackling Physical Inactivity A coordinated Approach*. Retrieved from: <http://parliamentarycommissiononphysicalactivity.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/apcoba-final.pdf>
2. Agencies for Nutrition Action. (2014). *Literature review on promoting physical activity at the local government level*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ana.org.nz/our-work/knowledge-translation>
3. The Lancet. (2012). *Physical activity*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thelancet.com/series/physical-activity>
4. Global Advocacy Council for Physical Activity & International Society for Health and Physical Activity. (2010). *The Toronto Charter for Physical Activity: A global call for action*. Retrieved from: [http://64.26.159.200/icpaph/en/toronto\\_charter.php](http://64.26.159.200/icpaph/en/toronto_charter.php)
5. Auckland Council, Waikato Regional Council & Wellington Regional Strategy Committee. (2013). *The costs of physical inactivity: Toward a regional full-cost accounting perspective*. Retrieved from: <http://www.waikatodhb.health.nz/assets/public-health-advice/project-energize/The-costs-of-physical-inactivity.pdf>
6. The Economic and Social Value of Sport and Recreation to New Zealand. Research Report No.322. September 2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.srknowledge.org.nz/research-completed/the-economic-and-social-value-of-sport-and-recreation-to-new-zealand->
7. Edwards, P. & Tsouros, A. (2006). *The Solid Facts. Promoting physical activity and active living in urban environments: The role of local governments*. World Health Organization: The regional office for Europe.
8. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Strategies to Prevent Obesity and Other Chronic Diseases: The CDC Guide to Strategies to Increase Physical Activity in the Community*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2011.
9. Queensland Government and Heart Foundation. (2010). *Active healthy communities: A resource package for local government to create supportive environments for physical activity and healthy eating*. Retrieved from: <http://www.activehealthycommunities.com.au/>
10. Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2012. (2012). Retrieved from: <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2002/0084/latest/DLM170873.html>
11. Allender, S., Gleeson, E., Crammond, B., Sacks, G., Lawrence, M., Peeters, A., Loff, B. & Swinburn, B. (2009). Moving beyond 'rates, roads and rubbish': How do local governments make choices about healthy public policy to prevent obesity? *Australia and New Zealand Health Policy*, 6(20), 1-8.
12. Mitchell, C., Cowburn, G. & Foster, C. (2011). Assessing the options for local government to use legal approaches to combat obesity in the UK: putting theory into practice. *Obesity Reviews*, 12(8), 660-667.
13. Salvesen, D., Evenson, K.R., Rodrigueq, D.A. & Brown, A. (2008). Factors influencing implementation of local policies to promote physical activity: a case study of Montgomery County, Maryland. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, 14(3), 280-288.
14. Shill, J., Mavoa, H., Crammond, B., Loff, B., Peeters, A., Lawrence, M., Allender, S., Sacks, G. & Swinburn, B. (2012). Regulation to create environments conducive to physical activity: Understanding the barriers and facilitators at the Australian State Government level. *Plos One*, 7(9), e42831.
15. National Heart Foundation Australia. (2014). *Blueprint for an active Australia: Government and community actions to increase population levels of physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour in Australia, 2014-2017 (Second Edition)*. National Heart Foundation Australia: Australia.
16. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2014). *NICE local government briefings: Physical activity*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nice.org.uk/advice/lgb3>
17. Prüss-Üstun, A. & Corvalán, C. (2006). *Preventing disease through healthy environments: Towards an estimate of the environmental burden of disease*. World Health Organization: Geneva.
18. World Health Organization. (2010). *Global recommendations on physical activity for health*. World Health Organization: Geneva.
19. Land Transport Management Act 2003. (2003). Retrieved from: <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2003/0118/latest/DLM226230.html>
20. Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2015/16–2024/25. (2014). Retrieved from: <http://www.transport.govt.nz/ourwork/keystrategiesandplans/gpsonlandtransportfunding/gps2015/>
21. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2013). *NICE local government briefings: Walking and cycling*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nice.org.uk/advice/lgb8>
22. Cycling Advocates Network. (2004). *50 ways to please your cyclists*. Cycle Advocates Network: Wellington.
23. Owen, N., Humpel, N., Leslie, E., Bauman, A. & Sallis, J.F. (2004). Understanding environmental influences on walking: review and research agenda. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 27(1), 67-76.

24. Giles-Corti, B. & Donovan, R.J. (2002). Socioeconomic status of differences in recreational physical activity levels and real and perceived access to a supportive environment. *Preventive Medicine*, 35(6), 601-611.
25. Macmillan, A., Connor, J., Witten, K., Kearns, R., Rees, D. & Woodward, A. (2014). The Societal Costs and Benefits of Commuter Bicycling: Simulating the Effects of Specific Policies Using System Dynamics Modeling, *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 122(4), DOI:10.1289/ehp.1307250.
26. Living Streets Aotearoa. (2014). *Living Streets Aotearoa Submission on the 2015 (Draft) Government Policy Statement for Land Transport*. Retrieved from: [http://www.livingstreets.org.nz/sites/livingstreets.org.nz/files/Livingpercent 20Streetspercent 20Submissionpercent 20GPSpercent 202014.pdf](http://www.livingstreets.org.nz/sites/livingstreets.org.nz/files/Livingpercent%20Streetspercent%20Submissionpercent%20GPSpercent%202014.pdf)
27. Heath, G.W., Brownson, R.C., Kruger, J., Miles, R., Powell, K.E., Ramsey, L.T. & The Task Force on Community Preventive Services (2006). The effectiveness of urban design and land use and transport policies to increase physical activity: a systematic review. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 3(suppl 1): S55-S76.
28. Ding, D., Sallis, J.F., Kerr, J., Lee, S. & Rosenberg, D.E. (2011). Neighbourhood environment and physical activity among youth: a review. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 41(4), 442-445.
29. Giles-Corti, B., Wood, G., Pikora, T., Learnihan, V., Bulsara, M., Van Niel, K., Timperio, A., McCormack, G. & Villanueva, K. (2011). School site and the potential to walk to school: the impact of street connectivity and traffic exposure in school neighbourhoods. *Health Place*, 17(2), 545-550.
30. Ross, A. & Chang, M. (2014). *Planning healthy-weight environments: a TCPA reuniting health with planning project*. TCPA: London.
31. Kessaram, T. (2013). *Getting into the Act: Local government and public health in 2013 and beyond*. Public Health Association of New Zealand, Wellington.
32. Internal Affairs. (2011). *Local Government in New Zealand: Local Councils*. Retrieved from: <http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz/lqip.nsf/wpgurl/About-Local-Government-Participate-in-Local-Government-Council-planning-and-consultation-processes>
33. New Zealand Transport Agency. (2013). *Our legal framework*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/about/who-and-what/what-we-do/legal-framework.html>

## Acknowledgements

The author thanks the following people for their useful feedback as peer reviewers of this snapshot: Celia Murphy (Quigley and Watts), Andrew Leslie (NZRA), Ruth Zeinert (Getting Dunedin Active) and Lauren Tamehana (Whanganui District Council).

Thanks to Carolyn Watts and Celia Murphy (Quigley and Watts) for doing the initial literature review and assisting with interviews. Special thanks to those who shared their knowledge and time as case studies and key informants.

The purpose, functions, duties and structures of local government bodies in New Zealand are determined by a number of national and region-specific legislation. The most specific to local government is the Local Government Act 2002 which outlines the purpose and role of local government, its powers and accountability<sup>(31)</sup>.

## Local Government Act 2002

The Local Government Act 2002 has undergone two sets of amendments since 2002. The first amendment to the Act was in 2010 and included the introduction of core services for local government to obtain 'better control of council costs, rates and activities'. As part of performing its role, local government must have particular regard to the contribution the following core services make to its communities:

- a) network infrastructure<sup>2</sup>
- b) public transport services
- c) solid waste collection and disposal
- d) the avoidance of mitigation of natural hazards
- e) libraries, museums, reserves, recreational facilities, and other community infrastructure<sup>3</sup>.

The second amendment in 2012 significantly changed the purpose of local government. Local government's focus on promoting the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of communities (the 'four well-beings') was removed from the purpose statement.

<sup>2</sup> Network infrastructure refers to the provision of roads and other transport, water, wastewater, and storm water collection and management.

<sup>3</sup> Community infrastructure means a) land or development assets on land, owned or controlled by the territorial authority to provide public amenities; and b) includes land the territorial authority will acquire for that purpose.

Annual Plans focus on year-to-year budgets. Councils prepare an annual plan in each of the two years between Long Term Plan reviews and set out what the council plans to do in the next 12 months to achieve its goals<sup>(32)</sup>. Councils are required to establish consultative processes around their planning and policy-making activities. There are also opportunities for community boards and for Māori to have direct participation in planning.

## Other relevant legislation

### Health Act 1956

The Health Act explicitly states 'it shall be the duty of every local authority to improve, promote, and protect public health within its district'. The Health Act directs local authorities to appoint environmental health officers, to identify and abate nuisances that may be harmful to health, and to make bylaws to protect public health. Local authorities must provide for sanitary works including drainage, sewerage and water works. The Director-General of the Ministry of Health can also direct local authorities should population health become jeopardised.

### Resource Management Act 1991

The Resource Management Act (RMA) sets out how the environment should be managed. It guides how natural

The new purpose for local government is to 'meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses'.

The purpose statement also requires local government to 'enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities'. The rationale for these changes to the Act was to 'contribute to the government's broader agenda to build a more competitive and productive economy, and improve the delivery of public services, by focusing councils on operating more efficiently and doing the things only councils can do'.

## Planning

Councils are required under the Local Government Act to produce Long Term Plans and Annual Plans for their local area and budgets are allocated according to these plans. Most councils are guided by these plans and have little flexibility to work outside of them.

Long Term Plans are the key planning tool for councils and set priorities for the medium to long-term. Long Term Plans are for a ten year period and renewed every three years. They must include information on activities, goods or services provided by a council, and specific funding and financial management policies and information<sup>(32)</sup>.

and physical resources are to be managed sustainably to enable people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing and for their health and safety. The Act sets out the functions, powers and duties of local government, and the resource consent and designation process. Through the RMA, local government is responsible for granting resource consents for proposed changes to the use of land, the coast, the water ways and discharges to them<sup>(31)</sup>. The government has proposed a review of the RMA in 2015 so its purpose may change.

### Land Transport Management Act 2003

The Land Transport Management Act sets out the requirements and processes for local government to obtain funding for roading construction and maintenance, and for the funding of Police on-road enforcement. The purpose of the Act is to contribute to an effective, efficient, and safe land transport system in the public interest. The Act was amended in 2008 which saw the establishment of the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) and its requirements. A further amendment was passed 2013 to 'create a more streamlined, simpler, and less prescriptive piece of legislation' and included requirements for regional councils to contract for the provision of public transport services<sup>(33)</sup>.